

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 006392

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT
VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND AFERNANDEZ,
IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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E.O.12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: OIC Summit, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Palestinian Territories (12/8)

11. Summary: Syrian papers today focused on the summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference in Mecca. Papers reported FM Shara's representation of President Asad and the meetings he held on the sidelines of the conference with Iraqi President Talabani, King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, Arab League SecGen Amr Mousa, and Palestinian PM Ahmad Ahmed Qurei. Headlines featured the address of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah at the opening session in which he called for moderation, saying "Islamic unity can't be achieved through the spilling of blood, as claimed by deviant people with their dark ideas." Speeches delivered at the opening session of the Islamic Summit underlined the importance of enhancing solidarity with all OIC countries to face challenges and threats targeting them. They also highlighted the necessity of resisting all extreme trends against Islam as well as deepening cooperative relations among Islamic countries in all domains.

All papers reported that Syrian anti-terrorism forces seized a bomb-making factory in Aleppo containing all necessary materials and tools to make bombs as well as the means for training in terrorist operations and carrying out bombings against public installations, government buildings, and security offices. They anti-terrorism forces also stormed the hideout of a terrorist Takfiri group [those who accuse other Muslims of being infidels] and critically wounded two of its members. The documents that the forces seized from the group enabled them to uncover plans for monitoring government officials and buildings and public installations. Before they died of their critical wounds, the two wounded terrorists admitted, that the Takfiri group intended to establish contacts with similar groups operating in the countries neighboring Syria. They also admitted that they planned to rob banks, shops, and financial establishments to finance their terrorist operations. In their recent operations against Takfiri terrorists, the anti-terrorism forces seized several weapons and explosive caches in various hideouts in Aleppo Governorate and the Damascus suburbs. Some of the weapons entered the country from Lebanon. They were seized during an attempt to take them back to Lebanon, fleeing from the security pursuit.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Foreign Minister Al-Shara represents President Asad at the opening session of the extraordinary Islamic Summit in Mecca. Shara reviews developments in Iraq with Iraqi President Talabani and agrees to intensify contacts. Shara reviews current developments and the situation in the Palestinian territories with King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, Arab League SecGen Amr Mousa, and Palestinian PM Ahmad Ahmed Qurei" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/8)

"Anti-terrorism forces seize a bomb-making factory and storm hideouts of terrorist Takfiri group in Aleppo and Damascus suburbs. Terrorists monitored government officials and buildings and public installations. Military rifles, machine guns, bombs, explosive materials, detonators, and various communication devices were seized. Some of the weapons entered the country from Lebanon and were seized during an attempt to take them back to Lebanon, fleeing from the security pursuit" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/8)

"Berri [Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament]: Pressure on Syria has nothing to do with the Al-Hariri assassination. New York Times: The international investigation is cracking" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/8)

"Al-Chaalan [former Iraqi Defense Minister]: Syria has embraced thousands of Iraqis; aggression toward Syria is a violation of Arab values" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/8)

"Bush highlights Iraqi reconstruction to counter deep mistrust of his policy. Death toll rises to 40 in Iraqi Police Academy bombings" (Government-owned Syria Times, 12/8)

"An Israeli raid on Gaza; One Palestinian martyred, 8 injured. Scores of Palestinians arrested in the 1948 territory. The Palestinian Legislative Council amends the election law" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/8)

"Tehran takes US threats seriously. Ivanov [Russian Minister of Defense]: We have full right to sell weapons to Iran"
(Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/8)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"A professional political Charlata"

Khalid al-Ashhab, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, on (12/8) attacked Walid Junblatt, leader of the Lebanese Progressive Socialist Party, without naming him: "He is a charlatan and a backstabbing ally who for over 30 years loudly applauded Syria's role in Lebanon's security and stability and talked about the brotherhood of blood and fate and the strategic alliance and then suddenly made a U-turn in a way that can only be interpreted in the chemistry of treachery and the policy of betrayal....

"His [Junblatt's] statement that Syria is threatening Lebanon's security and stability means that in the past 30 years he was one of two things: A professional political charlatan who lied to and misled his people through his secret or public alliance with the party that -- as he

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claims today -- sabotages Lebanon and threatens its security and stability, in which case he deserves to be stoned by the Lebanese people before anyone else; or he is a nave idiot who has been tricked for 30 years by a simple political game, in which case he does not deserve to be a leader, a symbol, or a representative of a people or part of a people...."

"'Shebaa' Is a Crack in the Wall of Lebanese Isolationists" Ali Al-Siwan, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, commented (12/8): "The isolationist Lebanese who bet on Detlev Mehlis to harm Syria will always continue their anti-Syria efforts....

"These Lebanese approach the issue of the Shebaa Farms from the perspective of collusion with the enemy and abandonment of pan-Arab commitments. They deny Hizbollah's sacrifices and Syria's efforts to save Lebanon from sedition and partition....

"These Lebanese isolationists are arguing about the identity of the Israeli-occupied Shebaa Farms -- whether Syrian or Lebanese -- in an attempt to withdraw Lebanon from the Arab-Zionist conflict....

"These Lebanese are in a dilemma: They do not want to accept that Shebaa Farms is Lebanese territory, so that these farms will not remain an excuse for Hizbollah to keep its weapons. At the same time, they do not want to take into consideration Syria's reasoning for delaying the demarcation of the Lebanese-Syrian border until after the liberation of the farms from the Israeli enemy, so that the June 4, 1967 border will not remain an excuse in Syria's insistence upon international legitimacy in any significant peace process...."

"Tehran's Strength Is in its Solid Position" Hanan Hamad, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (12/8): "Tehran's reaction to the recent Israeli threat against Iranian nuclear installations was stronger than usual....

"Israel and the United States know that Iran is not an easy target.... Iran has used its strong cards skillfully, forcing the other side to withdraw threats to refer its nuclear file to the Security Council and even to negotiate with it over security in Iraq....

"Iran is an example that must be followed in confronting the tyranny of force and adhering to the power of resolve...."

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